

ADDRESS delivered by Mike Mountain Horse at a meeting of the So-Ed Club, at the Y.M.C.A., in the City of Lethbridge, on Wednesday, the 10th day of May, A.D. 1944.

MIKE MOUNTAIN HORSE: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your kind introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, many theories have been passed by people who have studied Canadian history, more especially the history of the Canadian West. These people have theorized that the aborigines of this country originated from China, from Asia. They are supposed to have come from China, cut across the Bering Straits in boats and landed here. The Indian is supposed to be a descendant of the Chinese race according to the history that we are taught in our schools. I know that because I have been taught that and I have studied it. Now, let me tell you that it is no use walking up to an Indian and asking him, "Where did you come from?" because he would not commit himself, he would say that he was born right here, he was created right here and the Almighty who created the Indian lived here among them in the first period of the Indians' existence on this continent. We have no history, we have no stories, no legends connecting the Indians with any other country. If the Indian was a descendant of the Chinese race, where would the Indian be today? He would be in some restaurant eating rice. You never saw a Chinese get on a broncho and win a World's Championship. Indians have. It is quite true we have the colour of the Chinaman's hair, the colour of his skin, but that is the only way we are related to them.

Indians have different stories connected with the creation of this earth. I can take you as far back as the great flood, the flood that we read about in the Bible. The Creator, the Supreme Being decreed that the flood would visit the earth and would destroy everything, destroy everybody on the earth, the wild beasts, the birds, and after it destroyed all life the Lord Almighty said, "I will recreate the earth after my own likeness." This is one tribal legend. I could tell you about three or four but my time is very limited. He went up to the side of the mountain and he made a huge oven and molded a man out of clay. He made a fire in the oven and after he took the fire out he placed this form of a man in the oven and closed the entrance. He went back, took him out, and when he looked at him he said, "I left this fellow in there too long, he is no good. He won't do for this continent, he is burned black. Anyway, I will give him the breath of life and send him to some other country." So he gave him the breath of life and sent him to Africa, and that is how the Negroes came into being; they were cooked too much. He made a second try and when he took this one out he was not cooked enough. However, he gave him the breath of life and sent him to Europe, and that is how the white race came to be here; they weren't cooked enough. He made one more try and when he pulled this one out he looked at him and said, "Ah, that is just right. This is the fellow I want," and that is how the Indians came to be here. Well, this is only a legend but if I had time I could go through the seven periods that it took the Almighty to create the earth again.

We find out Indians, your Indians, your native people the

Blackfoot nation living in the Hudson's Bay district. This was not a part of their country before. They sent their warriors down here and they reported back that this was a very nice country to hunt in. So they came down here and drove out the people who were here before. They were one of the worst enemies we had at the time, the Cree tribe of Indians. My people, the Blackfoot nation, drove the Indians who were living in Southern Alberta right up north, and right over the mountains and right down to the other side of Medicine Hat, and we have been here ever since.

Now, we classify the Indian in three classes. The first class of Indian is the Indian whose blood is assimilated with the blood of another race. They are called Indians. I don't know why they are called Indians but they are 50-50. We call them halfbreeds but you people call them Indians. The second class of Indian is the Indian like myself and those boys over there. They are 100% Indian but they have gone to school. They have learned the ways of the Whiteman, they should look better. They live your mode of life, they worship your Supreme Being and they are taught to respect the laws of Canada. I am included in that class. The third class are the Indians that I love, the ones that I respect. They are the old, old-timers who chased the buffalo on these plains. They have never been inside a school. They are quickly going away from us; before long they will be no more. They are the people I will talk about, the old, old Indians who chased the buffalo and went on the warpath.

These Indians lived by hunting. They hunted the buffalo

and they fought their enemies, and they went on the warpath. People have a misconception of the Indian when they say they went out stealing horses, because they did not. They went out and got horses from people who were at war with them. It was up to the other tribe to have their young men look after their property, and it was their responsibility if they did not look after their own property. Our history books tell us that the Indians stole horses. As I say, that is not so. You did not hear during the first war nor in the present war that our troops stole so many guns from the enemy, you hear that they have captured so many guns, or they captured a town. Well, why say the Indians stole those horses? They were captured in a legitimate warfare. They are my people, the great warriors of Canada.

Our warriors had two fine traits, and I will talk about them now. They were mighty hunters and great fighters. And the Indian had another trait, one I do not care for very much, the Indian warrior will never make an attempt to work in the morning. I have seen all this. I was here in Lethbridge when Lethbridge was a very, very small town and my people moved from place to place and lived in tents. I knew the time when I would see a Whiteman and run away and hide. I recall on one occasion at the riverbottom here two whitemen came up to where I was playing. I started to run, crying at the top of my voice, and when these two whitemen saw me running they started in the other direction. The old Indian was very, very lazy. I have seen Indian men get up in the morning and have their women comb their hair; I have seen their women wash their faces for them. When the men came back from hunting it was the habit of the

women to sit at the foot of their beds and demand that their warriors put their feet on their laps and use them for a footstool.

Our mothers were great workers. They put up our teepees; they fixed the skins and made them soft; they went out and cut the wood, got the water, and they looked after we children. They did all the work around the encampment, the men did nothing. But it was the responsibility of the men, ladies and gentlemen, to go out on the prairie and bring in the meat. He did not care whether it was forty or fifty below zero, he would not see his family starve. In the days before the horse came he would go out on foot. This was the primitive way of hunting the buffalo. Buffalo calves' skin is very soft. The Indian would take his rope and his bow and arrow, get on all fours and put the skin over himself and start crawling up on the buffalo, and when he would get close enough he would shoot the beef that he wanted.

Now, he had no horses. You would naturally say, "How would he cart all that meat home?" Well, he would cut up his beef, butcher it, take the hide and spread it out and wrap the meat in the hide. He would take only the meat and leave the bones on the prairie. That is why in the early days you would see the prairie here covered with buffalo bones. Well, after putting the meat on the raw-hide he would cut a piece off the hide and sew it up. He would then take another long raw-hide and track the meat home through the snow. In the summertime he did the same thing as the skin would slide on the green grass.

Now, the better way to drive the buffalo would be to get up close and drive him over a hill. To do this the Indians fixed up a cone-shaped pile of rocks extending to the top of a bank, and behind this pile the warriors lay with their weapons. As other warriors would drive the buffaloes up towards the bank, the ones hidden behind the rocks would join in the chase until they drove the buffaloes over the bank. As they went over the bank there were other warriors waiting to shoot them down, and in that way they also got their beef. That is what we called the buffalo pound.

The Indians also fought their enemies, and every tribe that spoke a different language was automatically an enemy. It was the duty of the Indians to make themselves warriors in the eyes of the tribe. You would have a party of boys going out on the warpath on their own accord. They would form themselves into a small band and leave under one leader. And they would make preparations to go on the warpath; they would prepare their weapons of war, their moccasins and so on. For their food they would depend on the buffaloes they got on the way. Supposing this party went out in the wintertime, they would have to cross rivers. There would be ice floating, and there were no bridges. They had no horses. Now, how would they get across the river? The leader would look around and say, "There is Eagle Plume, he is the best man I have got, the best swimmer, the most able-bodied man I have," and he would say to him, "Eagle Plume, you have been selected to swim across and make a fire on the other side." It would be immaterial to Eagle Plume whether it was forty below zero, he had to get

across that river. Eagle Plume never refuses. Tribal laws say he must never refuse. If he refuses God will punish him and punishment is meted out on his return.

Eagle Plume would take two flints and dried buffalo chips which he has crushed up fine, tie these in a buckskin wrap, take off his clothing, put the whole thing on top of his head and start swimming across. When he would get to the other side he would be bleeding from contact with the floating ice. He would run to and fro to restore circulation to his body and at the same time picking up little chips from the dry trees. At last he would make an effort to sit down, take his flints and start a fire. This would take him something like fifteen or twenty minutes. When the fire is well kindled he would signal the others to start swimming. That is how they overcame that difficulty.

Now, they would go on the warpath and capture whatever enemy property was in their way, especially horses. After a few days of travel the hoofs of their ponies would get very slippery from travelling over the grass, so they would simply leave them behind and capture other horses.

The other tribe would sometimes put their horses in corrals and build a fire in order that they would see a person who might crawl into the corral. Other times they would take the rope into the teepee instead of tying the horse outside and in this way they would soon know if anyone was tampering with the horse. I remember my dad telling me of an experience he had. He crawled up and spotted the horse that he wanted to take and he noticed that the rope tied on

the horse went into the entrance of the teepee and the owner was holding it. He looked in and he saw the owner there. Well, he went and got a big block of wood and after he had sufficient slack he cut the rope and tied it around the block of wood and left the other fellow holding the bag, as it were. The captured horses were brought back to the reserve and the Indians were considered great warriors and braves.

Now, we read in our histories too about the Indians scalping their enemies. This is quite true, but the Blackfoot Indian never scalped women and they never scalped an enemy who was already dead, but they would scalp an enemy who they have come in hand to hand combat with. In present day wars our men are awarded decorations when they knock out a machine-gun nest. They do not give our boys award for going up and finding that the machine-gun crew is already dead. That machine-gun crew has to be alive and has to be shooting at them, and they have to knock them out before they can get an award. It is the same with scalping a person. You make a dive for him, catch hold of him and do your best to put him down, take out your knife and scalp him. I should have brought along the trusted blade I used when I went "jerrying" in No Man's Land. It is a great cure for dandruff. After you get your man down you take your knife and shove it right into his forehead, shove it right in here and run it right around until your incisions meet. Never mind if he squeals, just have those incisions meet. Then you pull the hair from the front and it will peel off just like an orange. After you arrive home with it you have it tanned and you can wear it on your shirt here. That

is to make an impression on your girl. If you have two you can wear one on the other side, but if you have more than two you can wear them for fringes on your buckskin suit. If you are on the prairies between here and Medicine Hat, around the Cypress Hills and north of Bow Island along the river you will see large circles made up of rocks. You might ask what those are. Well, those are what the primitive Indians used to hold their teepees down. He didn't use sticks because he had no tools. You will see a small circle inside the large circle. That small circle is the fire-place.

Today teepees are only used for ceremonial purposes. Teepees are sewn into one piece. In the old days when the dog was used for transportation purposes by the Indians the teepees were taken apart and each dog was given a separate piece, a separate weight to carry, and everybody walked in those days.

Indians, I am proud to say, never punish their children. The old Indian never took a stick to his child. My father never took a stick to me, my mother never scolded me, and today I am a normal person. I am not a criminal because my father never used a stick on me. But do not get the impression that we got away without being punished. We were punished and in a most severe way. This is the way we were punished; not exactly punished but done to harden the constitution. Early in the morning an Indian would come into our camp, regardless of whether it is forty, fifty or sixty below or whether you are two, three, four, five or six years old, and he will take you out of your bed, walk outside, go to the river and throw you in. That is often done before sunrise. He will then jump

in after you and show you how to swim. After he thinks you have had a sufficient swim he will let you run home, and your father or mother is supposed to pay him for that service. If there is no water available he will take all your clothes off and throw you in a snowbank. That is also done to harden the constitution. That is one of the reasons the warriors are able to swim rivers and not catch cold. And that is why in my youth I never caught a cold. I never caught a cold until I went to school and started drinking all kinds of lotions.

The Indian's food also consisted of berries and wild turnips. You can either eat them raw or cooked. That is what we ate. Straight west of here there is the wild turnip and they are very numerous. Along the cutbanks there is a thin strip of brownish earth and almost any time in the year you can take the clay from the top and this brown clay comes up in cakes. Well, we ate that. It is just like Cadbury's chocolate. It is very nourishing and it doesn't harm you. It is almost soilless when you take it off. And we scrape the sand from the trees in the springtime and take that too.

I have often been asked how an Indian child gets his name. He gets his name from God. If there is a baby born, whether a girl or a little boy, it should have a name. We will take this little baby to some warrior who has fought on the field of battle and we ask this warrior, "Will you please give my baby a name?" Well, he will go back through the years and recount his many experiences and name the baby after one of them. My father captured Three Guns in one battle that he took part in so my name when I was a little fellow was Three Guns. If he

had captured One Horse, why, he would call me Captured One Horse. Now, our chief out there is Chief Shot on Both Sides. People had quite a laugh about that name in the arena here in one of the war bond rallies where I spoke. Now, Shot on Both Sides' father took part in a battle and his enemies were shooting at him from both sides and he survived that battle, he lived through it. When his boy came into the world he remembered he had survived through that battle so he called his boy Chief Shot on Both Sides. And of course our fathers gave us pet names. If a person had a big nose he might be called Big Nose Boy. According to his physical peculiarities he is named. And then there are nicknames his chums give him, and sometimes they stick too.

Now, the paint on an Indian's face carries a meaning also. The paint on his face is copyrighted. He pays some old man for that, some old man who has used the same paint and has retired from the field of battle and does not go on the warpath any more. He has got that copyrighted and no other Indian can paint his face according to that design.

The songs you people call warwhoops. They are not warwhoops, they are songs. They are similar to the patriotic songs that we sing. They put a spirit into you to fight your enemies. That is what these songs are for. Each Indian has his own song too. Now, if two or three Indians were in this building and you heard them singing, you people would naturally think they were just making a noise, but we Indians can understand them and we can tell that each Indian is singing his own song. That is his own song and he has got it copyrighted.

The designs on our teepees have been in the tribe for centuries and centuries. We do not make our own designs, those are traditional designs that have been in the tribe for many hundreds of years. An Indian cannot go and sew up a teepee and paint it anyway he likes. No, he cannot do that. We stick to these traditional designs and we have them today.

And about marriages. A young Indian does not go up to a young lady and start wasting his time on her by telling her what beautiful yellow eyes she has and he never waits for a full moon to go out and start pecking at her like this (indicating). They do not do that. After arrangements are made between the old people that these people are to be married, the girl will sew up moccasins, walk to the boy's teepee, go in, take a pair of moccasins and put them on the feet of her prospective husband and if he allows her to put those moccasins on his feet then he has consented to be married. If the girl goes in and tries to put the moccasins on his feet and the young man pulls his feet away, that is a refusal and they do not get married.

When the Whiteman came up to this country we were very scared of him, and more especially the ones with the long beards. When we saw one we would generally run, there would not be a child in the town or village, they would be in the bush and would not come out all day. I have run many times. Later the government consented to take us and put us on the reserve and give us rations, feed us, give us \$5.00 a year, give us free hospitalization, free schooling for the Indian children, look after the sick, the old men, the aged and give

us ammunition to go out and hunt with. Well, they made a very, very poor attempt at the beginning but now things have taken shape quite a bit and the schooling that we have received, the most of us, I think, I can conscientiously say that we have a lot to be thankful for, those of us who have tried hard to be a credit to the people who are in charge of us. That is one of the reasons why during the First Great War and now the Second Great War you will see the Indian boys fighting side by side with your soldiers, with your boys, with your brothers. We realize, we are thankful for the freedom that we enjoy under the flag that we love to sing about, under that flag we love to see waving over our buildings. I am also proud to be able to say that the Indian can only tolerate one flag for this country, and that is the Red, White and Blue. He can only tolerate one adopted language, and that is the English language, and above all he can only tolerate one loyalty, and that is loyalty to the British Crown. Some people would wonder and say to themselves, "Why have these descendants of the aborigines of this country taken such a decided and firm stand regarding this great struggle which we have against Germany," I will tell you the reason, because those fighters of the plains have long loved their King, their Queen and their country. And who has a better right to fight for Canada than the Indians because after all they are the first Canadians. I think that this show of loyalty by the native sons of Canada to the British Crown should throw light on the sterling qualities of a race whose virtues are perhaps not sufficiently understood nor appreciated by other races of people. All peoples of the

democratic world should have one aim, one irrevocable purpose and that is to wipe out Hitler and his wild regime, wipe him right off the face of the earth. We should consolidate our efforts and resolve that as long as we see a man of Hitler's type we will never, never have peace on this earth. Now, let us get together, and I wish to leave you with the message which came down the line in one of the famous battles during the First Great War, "Hold them, Canada; don't let them pass." Thank you. (Applause)